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Consideration of the draft report by the Working Group of the Whole

Report of the informal open-ended working group on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities

Note by the Chairperson of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

By its resolution 62/273, the General Assembly endorsed the proposals, recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, contained in paragraphs 15 to 199 of its report (A/62/19). The informal open-ended working group on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities was therefore reconvened in accordance with paragraph 81 of that report. The report of the working group is hereby transmitted to the Special Committee for its consideration.

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Report of the informal open-ended working group on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 62/273, the General Assembly endorsed the proposals, recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, contained in paragraphs 15 to 199 of its report (A/62/19). The informal open-ended working group on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities was reconvened in accordance with paragraph 81 of that report.

2. The bureau of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations appointed Major General Bernd S. Lubenik of Austria and Colonel Hammad A. Dogar of Pakistan as Co-Chairs of the informal open-ended working group. The working group met on 17 December 2008 to consider the issue of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities as requested by the Special Committee. At the meeting, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided updated information on the status of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities. A summary of the briefing is provided in the annex to the present report.

3. The informal open-ended working group decided to submit its findings, contained in the present report, to the Special Committee at its substantive session of 2009.

II. Recommendation

4. While the requirement for some form of rapidly deployable capacity remains, apparently a clear solution is not presently available. Despite three years of work, the underlying issues that have plagued the efforts to raise a strategic reserve for the United Nations remain unsolved. Until the issues of troop contributions and funding are resolved, it appears that any efforts to build a stand-alone rapidly deployable capacity will remain elusive.

5. The informal open-ended working group on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities therefore recommends the following conclusions for consideration and decision by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations:

(a) To **agree** that the requirement for a rapidly deployable capacity to support a deployed mission in crisis remains;

(b) To **agree** not to continue to pursue the concept of an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity as it is presently unviable, unless appropriate financial arrangements for this purpose are identified.

Annex

Information provided by the Secretariat on enhanced rapidly deployable capacities

Background

1. The concept of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities grew out of the "strategic reserve" concept of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which met with opposition from Member States at the 2005 World Summit. Their concerns included: the concept of having a single reserve for United Nations peace operations; the cost of the proposed strategic reserve arrangement; and the need to take into account existing regional initiatives that could provide a reserve capability for United Nations operations. As a result, the World Summit did not endorse the proposal, although it did acknowledge the need for enhanced rapidly deployable capacities to reinforce operations in crisis.

2. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations developed the concept of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities in partnership with the Secretariat, and a range of options to meet the requirement were developed and described to the Special Committee on 27 October 2005. Three subsidiary working groups were then formed to develop these options in detail, with a briefing on progress being provided to the senior management of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in early 2006. The results were presented to the Special Committee in March 2006. At its substantive session of 2006, the Special Committee then directed the Department to conduct further work on the options (see A/60/19/Rev.1, para. 87).

3. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations developed a temporary policy, entitled "Reinforcement of field missions: enhanced rapid deployable capacities", dated 26 February 2007. That policy explained a three-step approach to identify the field missions in need of enhanced rapidly deployable capacity, determine the force requirements and then approach troop-contributing countries to pledge troops to provide the capacity. Five missions were identified and a strategic reinforcement needs assessment led by a director from the Department was conducted for each mission. After agreement among the extended senior management team in October 2007, 21 selected troop-contributing countries were approached to provide troops for certain missions.

4. By March 2008, only 11 troop-contributing countries had responded, resulting in only two offers for a battalion each to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and one offer of strategic lift capacity. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations decided to suspend its reinforcement policy because of the lack of support for the initiative from troop-contributing countries.

Purpose of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities

5. The purpose of an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity is to enable the Security Council to consider credible, predictable and effective options to reinforce a United Nations led mission in the face of an actual, imminent or evolving crisis, after all the response options immediately available to the affected mission have been utilized. Possible reasons an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity could be called upon include:

(a) To deter spoilers by the credible threat of military force "over the horizon";

(b) To prevent the failure of a United Nations peacekeeping mission in crisis through an effective and rapid deployment of a strategic response;

(c) To maximize the predictability of an external military response to a crisis, while accepting that full, standing guarantees are unlikely;

(d) To ensure that enhanced capacities are deployed under a Security Council mandate and, where possible, under United Nations command and control arrangements;

(e) To ensure the effectiveness of an external military response through, inter alia, interoperability with the existing mission;

(f) To ensure there is no significant unpredictable increase in costs.

6. A rapid and effective response to a serious crisis is necessary to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to safeguard the mission's mandate and credibility.

Background to the concept of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities

7. The concept of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities was developed following an earlier and unsuccessful request from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for Member States to consider the idea of having a dedicated strategic reserve. Member States had major concerns regarding the proposal for a strategic reserve and considered that a dedicated reserve force would not have the operational flexibility to address effectively the range and variety of crises that were likely to arise. Member States also considered the cost to the Organization of maintaining a strategic reserve in home-country locations would be an inefficient use of resources. Member States were also interested in building upon regional initiatives and possible support arrangements with regional organizations.

8. Consequently, while the 2005 World Summit did not endorse the strategic reserve proposal, the need for enhanced rapidly deployable capacities to reinforce operations in crisis was acknowledged. The World Summit also provided language that formed an agreed starting point for the review and development of an external reinforcement arrangement.

9. The Special Committee, in partnership with the Secretariat, considered the reinforcement requirement and developed a range of broad options. In developing those options, a number of assumptions were made:

(a) The requirement for an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity relates only to United Nations peacekeeping missions and not to other tasks, which may also require rapid deployment capacities;

(b) For new peacekeeping operations, the requirement for an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity will be determined during the mission planning process and included in the mission mandate. Such a capacity should be available from the time of the mission start-up, when it is at its most vulnerable;

(c) For existing peacekeeping operations, a regular process will be required to assess, identify and review requirements for an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity;

(d) The head of mission will be responsible for requesting a commitment to provide a strategic level response from United Nations Headquarters. The decision to commit to providing a response and the subsequent command and control arrangements for it will depend on whether the capability is provided under United Nations arrangements or under arrangements with non-United Nations actors, such as regional organizations.

Requirement and options

10. The requirement for enhanced rapidly deployable capacities has been defined as a predictable, credible and efficient strategic response to reinforce a peacekeeping mission in a crisis, such as a breakdown in the security situation, which is beyond the capacity of the mission to address. In order to meet this requirement, three options have been developed: regional organizations; troop-contributing countries and the United Nations Standby Arrangements System; and inter-mission cooperation.

11. The options vary with regard to potential geographical and functional areas of deployment; speed of political decision-making; capabilities and speed of deployment; cost; and arrangements for command, control and logistic support. These various scenarios and characteristics reinforce the requirement for flexibility in the solution for providing enhanced rapidly deployable capacities: one size does not fit all.

(a) Regional organizations

12. This option involves use of regional capabilities from regional entities such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the African Union, with no reimbursement from the United Nations. This option is considered to be feasible where the political will exists, the right capability is available at the right time and pre-arranged memorandums of understanding (or other suitable arrangements) can be agreed for specific missions. It is likely to have a limited range of capabilities and the capability will almost certainly remain under non-United Nations command and retain national rules of engagement. There is also a very wide variation of capabilities in existing regional organizations and arrangements. A United Nations-European Union agreement on the deployment of the European Union force in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is an example of this type of arrangement (in this case to support MONUC efforts during the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), which was authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1671 (2006).

13. The NATO Response Force has significant capacities that would be useful as an option to provide enhanced rapidly deployable capacities. However, it is highly unlikely that NATO forces would deploy under United Nations command and control arrangements and any decision would be taken on a case-by-case basis. The African Standby Force is not yet operational, although one of the five regional brigades, the one in East Africa, has made good progress. Some subregions, most notably the Economic Community of West African States, have demonstrated

capacity. For the foreseeable future, however, the African Union and its subregional organizations cannot deploy without external assistance in the form of strategic lift, some equipment, almost total logistic support for troop sustainment and financing. Therefore, an African Union enhanced rapidly deployable capacity is also unlikely to be totally self-sustaining, with implications for the peace operation in question.

(b) Troop-contributing countries and the United Nations Standby Arrangements System

14. This involves pre-negotiated, detailed arrangements with one or more troop-contributing countries for the deployment of additional forces to a specific mission on a case-by-case basis under agreed reimbursement mechanisms. This could include troop-contributing countries already participating in the mission or support from a Member State or States with capabilities and political commitments in the country concerned. This option is considered feasible where the political will exists, if rules, regulations and policies governing the commitment to the Standby Arrangements System are revised, if United Nations regulations provide sufficient flexibility, and if prospective troop-contributing countries have sufficient incentive. This option is likely to offer the broadest range of capabilities available, but it has cost implications for the United Nations. Existing troop contributors are probably the most wedded to the success of their current contribution. They will be concerned about protecting their troops that are already deployed, can operate under existing United Nations command and control arrangements, will be familiar with the area of operations (indeed troops may have served in the theatre previously) and will have a high degree of interoperability with troops on the ground. This option also offers flexibility in terms of geographic cover if a problem is widespread in a mission.

15. A potential mechanism for delivery of this option identified in the Working Group of the Special Committee is to establish an additional level in the United Nations Standby Arrangements System to secure offers of enhanced rapidly deployable capacity from troop-contributing countries as part of a revised Standby Arrangements System. Capability provided through the System would be deployed under United Nations command and would apply United Nations rules of engagement, while capability provided under a bilateral arrangement with a troop-contributing country could be deployed under national command and rules of engagement. The French national deployment in Cote d'Ivoire provides an example of a national commitment external to but supporting UNOCI.

(c) Inter-mission cooperation

16. The use of United Nations troops deployed in neighbouring United Nations peacekeeping missions is considered to be feasible where the political will exists, combined with availability of the right capability and the ability to respond in a timely manner. This option will likely be constrained by the range of capabilities available in a nearby mission and the prevailing conditions in the providing mission at the time of the crisis, such as existing commitment of troops to essential tasks. It may be the fastest and most affordable of all options if favourable circumstances exist at the time of a crisis. Reinforcement by inter-mission cooperation would provide reinforcements under United Nations command and rules of engagement.

17. The redeployment of troops from the United Nations Operation in Burundi (one infantry battalion, one hospital and 50 military observers) into MONUC under Security Council resolutions 1650 (2005) and 1669 (2006) is an example of

inter-mission cooperation. This deployment improved procedures in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations related to operational capabilities and readiness of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities, including crisis management procedures, funding arrangements between the providing and receiving missions and pre-briefing arrangements for potential troop-contributing countries, including the requirement for memorandums of understanding and status of forces and status of mission agreements. Another example is the deployment of the UNMIL quick reaction force to Freetown to reinforce security at the Special Court for Sierra Leone following the adoption of Council resolution 1688 (2006), to support the operation of securing the movement of Charles Taylor to The Hague. In addition, by its resolutions 1609 (2005) and 1657 (2006), the Council authorized redeployment of one infantry company from UNMIL to reinforce UNOCI.

18. The Special Committee was briefed on these options on 27 October 2005 and three subsidiary working groups were then formed to develop them. The extended senior management team of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was briefed on the progress of these working groups in early 2006, with results presented to the Special Committee in March 2006. After considering the results, the Special Committee directed the Department to identify the implications (see A/60/19/Rev.1, para. 87).

Policy and process

19. In response to this direction from the Special Committee, a number of subsidiary working groups were created to assess the viability of the identified options for enhanced rapidly deployable capacities. A needs assessment pilot project involving seven missions was conducted in mid-2006 with results presented to the Special Committee later that year. Subsequently, the Special Committee directed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to, inter alia: (a) continue to explore different options in consultation with Member States; (b) produce a generic deployment policy; and (c) conduct a reinforcement needs analysis and revise it periodically. To complete this level of analysis, a policy document entitled "Reinforcement of field missions: enhanced rapidly deployable capacities" was approved on 26 February 2007 by the Department for a six-month duration and later extended for a further three months. This policy initiated a three-step process of analysis and assessment (a) to determine which missions required support through enhanced rapidly deployable capacities; (b) to identify specific details of the most likely crisis response needed; and (c) to approach selected troop-contributing countries to commit capabilities. Further detail on the steps can be found in the policy document.

Steps one and two

20. After completing the needs assessment pilot project, five missions were identified as most needing support in respect of enhanced rapidly deployable capacities support in the short term. A strategic reinforcement needs assessment was completed for each mission, in which the size, type and response times of rapidly deployable capacity required was determined. Following a review of this analysis within United Nations Headquarters, the results were presented to the leadership of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on 8 October 2007. It was subsequently decided that there was then sufficient data and information to enable progress to step three.

Step three

21. In November 2007, notes verbales were sent to 21 troop-contributing countries requesting support for the enhanced rapidly deployable capabilities required for specific missions, with a response requested by 31 January 2008. By the end of January, three troop-contributing countries had responded to the note verbale. A follow-up e-mail was sent to each troop-contributing country in early February and two more responses were subsequently received. Some troop-contributing countries advised that they were still waiting for direction from their capitals and hence a follow-up facsimile was sent requesting responses by mid-March, prior to the annual session of the Special Committee. As at 31 March 2008, of the 21 Member States approached to provide troops for an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity, 11 formal responses had been received. Of these, all but two troop-contributing countries declined to offer such capabilities for a mission. One battalion (of the three requested) was provided for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and one battalion was offered for UNOCI, but the latter commitment was conditional upon receiving compensation and additional financial reimbursement to maintain the troops on high-readiness notice as they would then be unavailable for other commitments.

22. During the session of the Special Committee in 2008, some Member States highlighted that the unresolved issue of compensation or incentives necessary to maintain military forces at high readiness in anticipation of committing them as enhanced rapidly deployable capacity must be resolved. There was also criticism that the informal open-ended working group had not been consulted during the development process.